SPEECH OF HON. GEORGE W. JULIAN, OF INDIANA, ON THE SLAVERY QUESTION

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, MAY 14, 1850.

GEORGE WASHINGTON JULIAN

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THE SLAVERY QUESTION.

In Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union, on the President's Message transmitting the Constitution of California.

Mr. JULIAN said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Representing, as I do, one of the strongest anti-slavery districts in the Union, I feel called upon to express, as nearly as may be, the views and feelings of my constituents, in reference to the exciting and painfully-interesting question of slavery. I am not vain enough to suppose that anything I may say will influence the action of this committee; yet I should hereafter reproach myself were I to sit here day after day, and week after week, till the close of the session, listening to the monstrous heresies, and I am tempted to say the impudent bluster, of southern gentlemen, without confronting them on this floor with a becoming protest in the name of the people I have the honor to represent. Sir, what is the language with which these gentlemen have greeted our ears for some months past? The gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. CLINGMAN] tells us, that less pauperism and crime abound in the South than in the North, and that there never has existed a higher state of civilization than is now exhibited by the slaveholding States of this Union; and so in love is he with his "*peculiar* institution," which thus promotes the growth of civilization by turning three millions of human beings into savages, and prevents them from becoming paupers by converting them into brutes, that he gives out the threat, doubtless in behalf of his southern friends, that unless they are permitted, under national sanction, to extend their accursed system over the virgin soil of our territories, they will block the wheels of Government, revolutionize the forms of legislation, and involve this nation in the horrors of civil war. Nay, he goes farther, and anticipating the triumph of northern arms, and comparing the vanquished "chivalry" to the Spartans at Thermopylæ, he kindly furnishes the future historian with the epitaph which is to tell posterity the sad story of slaveholding valor: "*Here lived and died as noble a race as the sun ever shone upon*," fighting (he should have added) for the extension and perpetuation of human bondage!

The gentleman from Mississippi [Mr. BROWN] manifests an equal devotion to the controlling interest of the South. He declares that he "regards slavery as a great moral, social, political, and *religious* blessing—a blessing to the slave and a blessing to the master." The celebrated John Wesley was so "fanatical" as to declare that "slavery is the sum of all villainies." Had he lived in this enlightened age and Christian land, he would have learned that, on the contrary, it is the sum of all blessings. He would have been told that even the Bible sanctions it as a Divine institution. Southern gentlemen remind us that it "existed in the tents of the Patriarchs, and in the households of his own chosen people;" that "it was established by decree of Almighty God," and "is sanctioned in the Bible—in both Testaments—from Genesis to Revelation;" and so sacredly is it to be cherished, that we in the North are not allowed to give utterance to our deepest moral convictions respecting it. My friend from Mississippi graciously admits that we think slavery an evil; but he adds, "very well, think so; but *keep your thoughts to yourselves*." Thus, in the imperative mood and characteristic style of a slave-driver are we to be silenced. In this "freest nation on earth," our thoughts must be suppressed by this slaveholding inquisition. We must, I suppose, make a bonfire of the writings of Whittier, and expurgate our best literature. Indeed, to be consistent, and in order to eradicate every trace of "fanaticism" from the minds of the people, we must blot out the history of the American Revolution, and "keep our liberty a secret," lest we should give offence to the immaculate institution of the South. Of other institutions of society we may speak with the utmost freedom. We may talk of northern labor and northern pauperism. We may advocate with tongue and pen the most radical schemes of reform, and thus assail every existing form of civilization. We may discourse freely of things even the most sacred, as the Supreme Being, His attributes and providence,—yes, in this boasted land of free speech, we may deny his existence, or blaspheme his name by invoking his sanction of the most Heaven-daring crimes. But *American slavery* is an institution so precious, so beneficent, so exalted among the ordinances of God, so "sanctioned and *sanctified* by the legislation of two hundred years," that northern men are not permitted to breathe an honest whisper against it. We must hold our tongues and seal our lips before the majesty of this southern Moloch, lest he should lose some of the victims which otherwise his worshippers might sacrifice upon his blood-stained altar. Oh! the devouring loveliness, the enraptur-

ing beauties, the unspeakable *beatitudes* of the "patriarchal institution!" And what a blessed thing it must be to live in the pure atmosphere, and under the clear sky of the South, feasting upon philosophy and reason, far removed from the folly and "*fanaticism*" of the North!

And the gentleman from Mississippi, like his friend from North Carolina, is in favor of extending the blessings of slavery at all hazards. The South *will* not submit to be girdled round by free soil; and if we dare to thwart her purpose, we are reminded of the struggle of our fathers against British tyranny. Southern gentlemen point us to the battle-fields of our Revolution, and bid us beware. A northern man, especially if disposed to be "fanatical," would suppose that our southern brethren would avoid such allusions. Our fathers, it is true, resisted the aggressions of the mother country "at all hazards, and to the last extremity;" but their resistance was not in behalf of slavery, but *freedom*. Mr. Madison declared in 1783, that "it was the boast and pride of America that the rights for which she contended were the rights of human nature." And Mr. Jefferson said, that "*one hour*" of this American slavery, which has been so recently transfigured into all blessedness, "is fraught with more misery than *ages* of that which we rose in rebellion to oppose." In speaking of an apprehended struggle of the blacks to rid themselves of their bondage, he affirmed that "the Almighty has no attribute which can take sides with us in such a contest." Yet southern gentlemen appeal to our revolutionary history as a warning to us, and a justification of a war on their part, not for the establishment, but for the *subversion* of liberty and the *destruction* of "the rights of human nature," by the indefinite extension over free lands of that system of bondage which the very soul of Jefferson abhorred. All this to northern men seems strange. As a specimen of southern philosophy it may be very creditable to politicians from that quarter, and it may appeal powerfully to their patriotism; but we cannot comprehend it. Nothing short of the serene understanding and unclouded vision of a slaveholder, can penetrate into the marrow of such arguments in defence of the South.

The gentleman from Virginia [Mr. MORTON] makes war upon the ballot-box. He says it has become "sectional;" and a distinguished gentleman in the other end of the Capitol, after charging it with being the parent of the anti-slavery agitation and its apprehended disasters to the country, pronounces it "worse than Pandora's box." We in the North have been taught that a constitutional majority should rule. We believe this principle lies at the foundation of our free system of government. We have been so "fanatical" as to regard the ballot box as the palladium of our liberty. But our slaveholding brethren have discovered that this supposed safeguard of freedom is in fact an engine of mischief. It is the dreaded instrument by which this Union is to be broken into fragments. How we should get along in a Democratic government without it, I am not able to explain; and I regret that southern gentlemen, whose minds are free from any "fanatical" influence, have not seen fit to enlighten us on that subject.

The gentleman from Georgia [Mr. WELLBORN] assails the dogma that "men are created equal:" he styles it "a mystical postulate," although our fathers regarded it as a self-evident truth. They, I suppose, lived in the twilight of political wisdom; for since I have had the honor to occupy a seat on this floor, I have on more occasions than one heard southern gentlemen denounce Jefferson as a sophist, and the Declaration of Independence as a humbug. And some of these gentlemen, strange to tell, coolly style themselves *Democrats!* Why, we are told that so far from being created equal, men are not created at all. Adam alone was a *created* man. Neither are men born. Infants are born, and grow up to the estate of manhood; but men are neither born nor created. The *equality* of men is declared to be absurd for other reasons. Some men, we are told, are taller than others, some of a fairer complexion, some more richly endowed with intellect; as if the author of the Declaration of Independence had meant to affirm that men are equal in respect to their physical or intellectual peculiarities!

Mr. Chairman, I will speak seriously. I need not further multiply these examples of southern opinion and feeling. I have brought them forward because, while the cry of "northern fanaticism" is incessantly ringing in our ears, I desire the country to judge whether a much larger share of fanaticism does not exist in the southern States; and whether this slaveholding fanaticism is not infinitely less excusable than that which prevails in the North. Sir, I can respect the man who, under the impulse of philanthropy or patriotism, deals his ill-judged blows at an institution which is crushing the dearest rights of millions, and now seeks at all hazards to curse new regions with its presence; but it is difficult to respect the slaveholder, who, with his foot upon the neck of his brother, sits down with his Bible in one hand and his metaphysics in the other, to argue with me, that the truths of the Declaration of Independence are mere sophisms, and that the forcible stripping of three millions of human beings of all their rights, even their humanity itself, receives the sanction of the Almighty, and is a blessing to both tyrant and slave. This is a species of fanaticism above all others the most distasteful, the most preposterous, the most revolting. I will not undertake to combat these absurdities of its champions; for it has been said truly, that to argue with men who have renounced the use and authority of reason, and whose philosophy consists in holding humanity in contempt, is like administering medicine to the dead, or endeavoring to convert an atheist by Scripture.

Mr. Chairman, we hear much of northern and southern aggression. Nothing is more current in southern speeches and newspapers than the charge that the people of the free States are *aggressing* upon the rights of the South; and this Union, it seems, is to be dissolved, unless these aggressions shall cease. On the other hand, the people of the free States charge the South with being the aggressor, and plead not guilty to the indictment of the slaveholders. Now, how stands the case? Who is the aggressor? This is the question to be solved, and the one I propose mainly to examine. I wish to do this fairly and dispassionately; for I am fully aware of the differences of opinion which prevail in regard to it, resulting, perhaps necessarily, from the different circumstances of the parties.

The charge of northern aggression I certainly

deny. It has no just foundation. Neither is the charge of southern aggression, perhaps, fully and strictly true. The truth rather seems to be, that under the lead of southern counsels, both sections of the Union have united in enlarging and aggrandizing the slave power. This proposition I shall endeavor to establish.

What are these northern aggressions of which we have heard so much complaint? Of what hostile acts do they consist? Have the people of the free States attempted to interfere, by law, with slavery in the South? This charge, I am aware, is frequently brought against us. You can scarcely open a newspaper from that quarter in which it is not gravely made. It has been again and again denied by northern men on this floor, but southern gentlemen still continue to repeat it. Sometimes it is preferred against the people of the North generally, but more frequently against a comparatively small portion of them as the Free-Soil party. The charge is utterly unfounded in truth. The Whigs and Democrats of the North, as well as the Free Soil men, disclaim all right on the part of Congress to touch the institution of slavery where it exists. We all agree that the subject is beyond our control. As regards the naked question of constitutional power, Congress has no more right to abolish slavery in South Carolina, than it has to abolish free schools in Massachusetts—no more right to *support* slavery in the one State than in the other. It is an institution dependent wholly upon State sovereignty, with which the General Government has no more concern than with slavery in Russia or Austria. It is true, that some of us in the North claim the right to assault slavery with moral weapons, even in the States. When the slaveholder says to us that on this subject we must keep our thoughts to ourselves, we shall obey him if it suits us. We have a right to employ those moral forces by which reforms of every kind are carried forward. We understand the power of opinion. We believe, in the language of Dr. Channing, that "opinion is stronger than kings, mobs, Lynch-laws, or any other laws for the suppression of thought and speech;" and that, "whoever spreads through his circle, be that circle wide or narrow, just opinions and views respecting slavery, hastens its fall." Sir, it is not only our right, but our duty, to give utterance to our cherished moral convictions; and if slavery, rooted as it is in the institutions and opinions of the South, cannot brave the growing disapprobation of Christendom, let it perish. And it will perish. If, by "reënacting the law of God," we can prevent its extension, the South will be constrained to adopt some plan of gradual emancipation. She will realize forcibly the important fact, which she now endeavors to overlook, that truth, justice, humanity, and the spirit of the age, are all leagued against her system. I will not harbor the impious thought that an institution, so freighted with wretchedness and wo, is to be perpetuated under the providence of God. I cannot adopt a principle that would dethrone the Almighty, and make Satan the governor of the moral world. It is "the fool" who "hath said in his heart there is no God." Nor do we mean to be silenced by the hackneyed argument that slavery is a *civil* institution, and therefore none of our business. We deny that the public laws of a community can sanctify oppression, or stifle the expression of our sympathy for the oppressed. Your slavery, when intrenched behind your institutions, is still slavery; and although your laws may uphold it, they cannot repeal that Christian law, which teaches the universal brotherhood of our race. But while I thus frankly avow these sentiments, I repeat what I have already said, that the people of the North claim no right, through the action of the General Government, to interfere with slavery in the slaveholding States. We most emphatically disavow any such purpose. Are we, then, guilty of aggression upon the rights of the slaveholder?

We are charged with violating the clause in the Federal Constitution relative to fugitives from labor. This is among the gravest accusations preferred against us. Sir, this clause, and the act of Congress made in pursuance of it, have been elaborately argued and solemnly adjudicated upon in the highest court in this nation. Our duty in the free States has been made so plain that a child may understand it. I would not refer to this subject, which has been so often discussed on this floor, and repeat what has been so often said, were it not for the unending clamor of the South against us. We are driven to a repetition of the grounds of our defence. We say the slave-hunter may come upon our soil in pursuit of his fugitive, and take him, if he is able, either with or without warrant, and we are not allowed to interfere in the race. "Hands off" is our covenant, and the whole of it. If the owner sees fit to sue out a warrant, he must go before a United States officer with his complaint. It is not the duty of our State magistrates to aid him, the execution of the clause in question depending exclusively upon Federal authority. I think I state fairly the opinion of the Supreme Court in the case of Prigg *vs.* the State of Pennsylvania. Now, if Congress alone can provide for the execution of this clause through Federal jurisdiction, and the State magistrates of the North are under no obligations to interfere, is it a violation of the constitutional rights of the South for us to pass laws prohibiting such interference? I would like to have southern gentlemen answer this question; for I insist upon it, that if the Federal Constitution does not *require* them to assist in the recapture of fugitives, it cannot be an aggression upon southern rights to withhold such assistance, and thus maintain the position of neutrality, or non-action, assigned them by the Constitution. Can it be that the northern States have any other duties to perform than those which the Constitution itself imposes? Is slavery so endeared to us that we must *volunteer* in its support? Sir, in examining this question, the constitutional rights of the South, and the corresponding constitutional obligations of the North, are the only legitimate matters of consideration. No free State has as yet passed any laws discharging fugitives from the service they owe by the laws of other States, or preventing their recapture; and if this is not done, there can be no reasonable ground of complaint against the North. According to the decision alluded to, the fugitive may be recaptured without warrant, and, without any trial of his rights by jury or otherwise, carried into slavery. This manifestly exposes the colored people of the free States to the southern kidnapper. They have the right, which belongs to all communities, to guard the liberties of their own

citizens; and if, for this purpose, some of them have passed laws against the kidnapping of free persons as slaves, and providing a trial by jury to determine the question whether the party claimed is or is not a slave, is it an aggression upon southern rights? When the free colored citizens of the North visit the ports of South Carolina, they are thrown into prison, and sometimes even sold into slavery. This, if I mistake not, is justified by the South on the ground of a necessary police regulation. Have not the northern States a right to establish *their* police regulations, to secure the rights of *their* citizens? Are not police regulations in behalf of liberty as justifiable as police regulations in behalf of slavery?

As regards the enticement of slaves from their masters, the number of such cases is small. Neither the States, nor the mass of their citizens, are accountable, or have any connection whatever with such transactions. The great majority of escapes are prompted by other causes than northern interference. The slave has the power of locomotion, and the instinct to be free; and it would indeed be wonderful did he not, of his own will and by his own efforts, struggle for the prize of which he has been robbed. That men will strive to better their condition is a law of nature. The flight of the bondman is a necessary consequence of the oppression under which he groans. Blame not the North for this, but blame your diabolical system, which impiously tramples under foot the God-given rights of men. Upbraid nature, for she is always "agitating" the question of slavery, and persuading its victims to flee. You hold three millions of your fellow-beings as chattels. You shut out from them the light of the Bible, and degrade and brutalize them to the extent of your power, for your system requires it. You deny them that principle of eternal justice, a fair day's wages for a fair day's work. You sunder their dearest relations, separating at your will husbands and wives, parents and children. And do you suppose the poor slave, smarting under these wrongs, will not seek deliverance by flight? And when, through peril and starvation, he finds his way among us, panting for that liberty for which our fathers poured out their blood, do you imagine we shall drop our work and join in the chase with his Christless pursuers? Sir, there is no power on earth that can induce us thus to take sides with the oppressor. Such, I rejoice to believe, is the public sentiment of the North, that I care not what laws Congress may enact, the slavehunter will find himself unaided. The free States will observe faithfully the compromises of the Constitution. They will give up their soil as a hunting ground for the slaveholder, suspending their sovereignty that he may give free chase to his fugitive. They will pass no law to discharge him from the service he may legally owe to his claimant, or to hinder his recapture. But we *will* not actively coöperate against the unhappy victim of your tyranny. And if southern gentlemen mean to insist upon such active coöperation on our part, as a condition of their continuing in the Union, they may as well, in my judgment, begin to look about them for some way of getting out of it on the best terms they can. Under no circumstances, I trust, will we yield to their demand.

Another intolerable aggression with which the North is charged is that of scattering incendiary publications in the South, designed to incite insurrections among the slaves. The *southern* gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. Ross] has paraded this charge in the most hideous colors. My friend from North Carolina has also been quite graphic in setting it forth, declaring that the free States "keep up and foster in their bosoms Abolition 'societies, whose main purpose is to scatter fire-'brands throughout the South, to incite servile 'insurrections, and stimulate by licentious pic-'tures our negroes to invade the persons of our 'white women." Sir, this is a serious accusation, and if true, the South unquestionably has a right to complain. I will not charge the gentleman with fabricating it, but I regret that he did not produce the evidence on which he felt authorized to make it. I deny the charge. I deny that the free States "keep up and foster in their bosoms Abolition societies," for any purpose. The Abolition societies, now known as such, belong to what is called the Garrison school. The northern States are no more responsible for their doings than the southern States. Unlike all other parties in the North, they lay down their platform *outside* of the Constitution, and hold that the freedom of the black race can only be accomplished by its overthrow; but they rely upon moral force alone for the triumph of their cause. I deny that they are guilty of inciting, or of wishing to incite, servile insurrections, or of scattering firebrands among the slaves, or licentious pictures. These Abolitionists are generally the friends of peace, non-resistants, the enemies of violence and blood; and they would regret as much as any people in the Union to see a servile war set on foot by the millions in the land of slavery. I will add further, while dissenting entirely from their doctrines, that they have among them some of the purest and most gifted men in the nation. But is the charge meant for the Free-Soil party of the North? Are they the incendiaries complained of, and their doctrines the firebrands which have been scattered in the South? We hold that Congress should abolish slavery in this District, prevent its extension beyond its present limits, refuse the admission of any more slave States, and that the Government should relieve itself from all responsibility for the existence or support of slavery where it has the constitutional power thus to relieve itself, leaving it a State institution, dependent upon State sovereignty exclusively. We are for non-intervention in its true sense. Such is our creed, and we proclaim it North and South. If it is incendiary, then are we guilty, for our newspapers circulate in the slaveholding States. If our faith is a firebrand, we have scattered it, not among your slaves, who are unable to read, but among their owners. Acting within the Constitution, and resolving not to go beyond its granted powers, we mean to avail ourselves of a free press to disseminate our views far and wide. If truth is incendiary, we shall still proclaim it; if our constitutional acts are firebrands, we shall nevertheless do our duty. Sir, this charge has been conceived in the diseased brain of the slaveholder, or the sickly conscience of the doughface. I reiterate my denial that any party in the free States has labored to bring about a war between the two races in the South. I am aware that we have our ultra men among us, nor do I pretend to justify all they have done. They must answer for themselves, and cannot involve the *North* in their responsibility. But

there is no party in the free States that harbors any such purpose, or that would not shudder at the contemplation of so merciless and heart-appalling a project.

Passing over the subject of slavery in this District, which I shall notice in a different connection, I come now to the Wilmot proviso. This would seem to be the sum of all wrongs and outrages—the aggression of aggressions—the monster that, if not at once throttled and destroyed, is to rend the Union asunder. Let us once more look it in the face, take its dimensions, and contemplate its supposed power of mischief. This Wilmot proviso has been much discussed in Congress, and throughout the country; it might be thought, by this time, a stale topic; yet it is far from being an uninteresting one, as the continual discussion of it here evinces. Endeavoring as much as possible to lay aside passion, I would say to southern gentlemen, "Let us reason together." Suppose this alarming measure should pass through both Houses of Congress, and receive the Executive sanction, I ask wherein would consist the aggression upon the guarantied rights of the South? Would not every slave State still retain its sovereignty over its peculiar institution? Would not the rights of the master, as sanctioned by local law, remain unimpaired? Look next at the constitutional compromises. The free States bound themselves to allow you to pursue your fugitives upon their soil. Would the adoption of the proviso affect, in the smallest degree, this right? We agreed that you might carry on—or, if you please, that we would join you in carrying on—the slave trade, for twenty years. We faithfully lived up to this compromise; and there is, long since, an end of it. Of course, the proviso can have nothing to do with it. Lastly, it was stipulated that every five of your slaves, for the purposes of taxation and representation, should be counted equal to three of our citizens. Most obviously, the passage of the proviso would not invalidate the rights of the South growing out of this compromise. The old slave States, and those subsequently admitted, would retain all the advantages of the original bargain. Now, I maintain that these subjects of taxation, representation, and the recovery of fugitives, are the only matters touching which Congress can constitutionally legislate in favor of slavery. So far, I admit, our fathers compromised the freedom of the black race, and involved the free States in the political obligation to uphold slavery. Beyond these express compromises, they did not go, nor design to go. They yielded thus much to the South, under the impelling desire for union, believing that the powers of the Government, with the exceptions expressly made, would be "actively and perpetually exerted on the side of freedom," and that slavery would gradually cease to exist in the country. I do not speak of this as matter of conjecture. As early as 1774, Mr. Jefferson declared that "the abolition of domestic slavery is the greatest object of desire in these colonies;" and the opinion was then common throughout the country that this object could be attained by discontinuing the importation of slaves from abroad. The action of the memorable Congress of this year, and popular movements in all the colonies, about this time, evinced a very decided determination to carry into practice this non-importation policy. This, I presume, will be denied by no one. Our revolutionary struggle commenced soon afterwards; and, basing its justification upon the inalienable rights of man, it could not fail to give an impulse to the spirit of liberty favorable to the abolition of slavery in the colonies. After the war was over, Mr. Jefferson himself declared that such had been its tendency. Indeed, our fathers could not avoid seeing that slavery was practically at war with the Declaration of Independence, and their own example in resisting the tyranny of Britain. In 1787 the Federal Constitution was framed, and it is a noteworthy fact, that the word *slave* is not to be found in it. According to Mr. Madison, this word was studiously omitted, to avoid the appearance of a sanction, by the Federal Government, of the idea "that there could be property in man." This circumstance, it seems to me, is very significant. The Constitution is so guardedly framed, that, were slavery at any moment to cease to exist, scarcely a clause or a word would require to be changed. Who does not see in this, that whilst our fathers were framing a Constitution that was to last for ages, the idea stood out palpably before their minds, that the days of slavery were numbered? Be it remembered, too, that at the time the Constitution was adopted, slavery had already been abolished, or measures had been taken for its abolition, in seven of the thirteen colonies; and at the very time the Convention which formed the Constitution was in session, maturing its provisions, the Congress of the Confederation was sitting at New York, enacting the celebrated ordinance by which territory enough for five large States was forever consecrated to freedom. Every inch of soil which the Government then owned was, by this ordinance, made free, and a preponderance secured in favor of the North of twelve non-slaveholding to only six slaveholding States. Thus we see, that at the time the Government was about to enter upon its career, and to exemplify the spirit of its founders, slavery was a receding power, a decaying interest, a perishing institution. Not chains and stripes, but *freedom*, was the dominant idea, the great thought of our fathers. They would have been astounded at the suggestion that slavery was to be perpetuated in this country, as the source of all blessings, and lauded as "the corner-stone of our republican edifice." It was among them, and had been forced upon them by the mother country; and not being able immediately to get rid of it, it was to be *tolerated* and *endured*, till measures could be taken for its final extirpation from the land. And if they regarded it as a curse, and did not expect it to be perpetuated where it then existed, much less did they imagine that it was to be carried into new regions under the sanction of the government of their formation, and become the great central power and all-absorbing interest of the nation Sir, the thought is monstrous, that the northern States, when reluctantly agreeing to those compromises by which slavery received a qualified support in the old States, intended that those compromises should afterwards be indefinitely extended over the American continent. Let it be borne in mind, also, as corroborating the view under consideration, that the founders of our Government had no expectation that the boundaries of the United States, as established by the treaty of 1783, would ever be enlarged. There is not one syllable of

evidence, either in the Constitution itself, or the history of its formation, to justify the idea that the acquisition of foreign territory was contemplated. This has been admitted by distinguished southern gentlemen in this Hall, and in the other end of the Capitol. Mr. Jefferson seems to have entertained this view; for he questioned the power of the nation to annex foreign territory without an amendment of the Constitution. I deduce from this the obvious and inevitable conclusion, that the Constitution was made *for the United States as then bounded*, and that the compromises on the subject of slavery, to which the northern States assented, had reference alone to the slavery of the *then* slaveholding States; the slavery that was dwindling and perishing under the weight of its own acknowledged evils; the slavery that our fathers prevented from spreading into the only territory then belonging to the Government; the slavery that was almost universally expected, at no very distant day, to be swept from the Republic. The adoption of the Wilmot proviso, therefore, would be in harmony with the Constitution, with the views and expectations of the people at the time of its formation, and with the Declaration of Independence, on which our fathers planted themselves in the struggle against a foreign yoke. It is impossible to escape this conclusion without contradicting their truth of history, and branding the founders of the Government as hypocrites, who, after having paraded the rights of man before the world, and achieved their own freedom, deliberately went to work to found an empire of slaves. And yet southern gentlemen speak of the restriction of slavery as an *aggression* upon their rights! What makes this charge look still worse is the fact, that the supreme power of legislation by Congress over the territories of the Government has been uniformly exercised from its beginning till the year 1848, and acquiesced in by all its departments. The power in question—that of restricting slavery—was exercised in 1787; it was exercised in 1820; it was exercised in the passage of the resolutions annexing Texas in 1845, and in its most objectionable form; and it was again exercised in 1848, with the sanction of a slaveholding President. And still we are told that the passage of the proviso would be such an intolerable outrage as to justify the dissolution of the Union!

Mr. Chairman, I have now briefly noticed most of the alleged aggressions of the North. The historical facts I have brought forward bearing upon the question of slavery restriction, have been often presented; but they cannot be too often repeated, or too carefully remembered, in the present crisis. Sir, it is as true at this day as at any former period of our history, that "a frequent recurrence to first principles is absolutely necessary to preserve the blessings of liberty." Turning now to the other side of the picture, I propose to glance at that policy and some of those acts by which slavery, instead of wearing out its life within its original limits, has been transplanted into new regions, fostered by the Government as a great national interest, and interwoven with the whole fabric of its policy. I shall make no special complaint about "southern aggression," for it will appear, as I have already stated, that the slave power has built itself up by the coöperation or acquiescence of the non-slaveholding States. Nor shall I claim any novelty for the facts I am about to present. They form a part of the history of the country and the public records of the Government. Through various channels they have found their way to the people; yet it may not be entirely a useless labor to gather them together and endeavor to keep them in remembrance in determining what further concessions shall be made to the demands of slavery.

At the time the Federal Constitution was adopted, the States of North Carolina and Georgia claimed certain territory, which they afterwards ceded or relinquished to the General Government; and out of this territory the three States of Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi, were formed and successively admitted into the Union. The compromises by which the northern States had bound themselves in reference to slavery in the old States, were now stretched over these new ones, containing at present a slave population considerably exceeding that of the entire Union at the time of its formation. I have already shown that such an accession of slaveholding States, thus forcing the North into a further partnership with the curses of slavery, was not contemplated by our fathers. It was accomplished, however, and of course by the aid of northern votes.

In 1803 we gave fifteen millions of dollars for the territory of Louisiana, and the three large slave States of Louisiana, Arkansas, and Missouri, were subsequently carved out of it, and from time to time admitted into the Union. They contain a slave population of upwards of three hundred thousand souls. Here, again, the obligation of the free States to support slavery was enlarged, and the fond expectation of our fathers disappointed.

In 1819 we gave five millions of dollars for the territory of Florida. We did not buy it on account of the value of its lands, or of the added wealth it would bring into the Union, but mainly to strengthen the slaveholding interest. Difficulties were apprehended from the pursuit of fugitives into the territory whilst it continued a Spanish province, and to obviate these difficulties, and at the same time to widen the domain of slavery, the purchase was made. Florida was subsequently admitted, by the help of northern votes, into full fellowship with Massachusetts and the other free States, whose relations with slavery were thus again extended, in violation of the faith upon which the Union had been consummated.

In 1845 Texas was annexed, containing territory enough for five or six States. That this was a measure "essentially southern in its character," is placed beyond all doubt by the records of the State Department. It is likewise proved by the declarations of southern members of Congress in 1844, and by the avowals of the southern press and of leading men in the South, from the time the question was first agitated till the project was consummated. No man, it seems to me, can read the history of Texas from its first settlement by emigrants from this country, and for one moment doubt the truth of what I assert. I know it has been said on this floor that the acquisition of Texas was not a southern measure, but a measure of the National Democratic party. I am aware, too, that John Quincy Adams declared in 1845 that it was "in its conception and in its conclusion a Whig measure." With these declarations I have nothing to do. I do not charge any party

in the North with favoring annexation with the design of extending slavery. I speak not as a partisan, but as a seeker of *facts*, bearing upon the alleged charge of northern aggression; and what I assert is, that while the motive of the South in grasping Texas was unmasked, and was in fact glaringly manifest, the North was induced to come to her rescue, and thus added an empire of slavery to her dominions in the Southwest. Was this a northern aggression? Nine slaveholding States have been added to the Union since the date of its formation, and five of them out of soil then the property of foreign nations. All this has been *generously* done by the free States, for they have had the strength in every instance to prevent these additions and this constantly-augmenting southern power.

The facts I have stated are significant. They show that the northern States, instead of aggressing upon the rights of the South, have aided her in incorporating additional slaveholding States into the Union, whenever such aid has been demanded. But this is not all. Some thirty years ago the States of Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, North Carolina, Arkansas, and Missouri, were more or less incumbered with an Indian population. The white man and his slave were shut out from large regions of those States by the barriers of the red man, which the States themselves had no power to remove. All these regions are now redeemed from the Indian, and acutal slavery extended where it could not go before; and all this has been done by the help of northern votes; for without that help, the laws could not have been passed, nor the treaties have been ratified, by which this great extension of slavery in so many great States was accomplished.* What a commentary upon the charge of northern aggression!

In 1778 and 1790 the States of Virginia and Maryland ceded to the General Government the territory constituting the District of Columbia, till the late retrocession of the portion ceded by the former. These cessions, under the Constitution, necessarily gave Congress the exclusive power of legislation over the territory ceded, and its inhabitants. Congress accepted these grants, and in 1801 reënacted the slave codes of Maryland and Virginia, and thus legalized and *nationalized* slavery in this District. Slaves are now held here by virtue of this law, and have been so held for nearly half a century. The free States have always had strength enough in Congress to repeal it, but they have forborne to do so. They have done more: they have permitted you to carry on, by their sanction, the slave traffic here, which is interdicted by your own slave States. This execrable commerce, which the laws of the civilized world pronounce piracy, punishable with death, and which even the Sultan of Turkey and the Bey of Tunis have put under their ban; this "piratical warfare," as Jefferson called it, and which he declared three quarters of a century ago, to be "the opprobium of Infidel powers;" this heir of all abominations, has existed here for nearly fifty years by *our* permission; here in the heart of this model Republic, around the walls of its Capitol, and under the folds of its flag; here, in the noon of the nineteenth century, and under the full blaze of Christian truth! And northern men have not only upheld this traffic thus far, but their forbearance towards the South inclines some of them to uphold it still longer. I doubt if there are *men* enough in Congress to-day to pass a bill through either House for its abolition. And yet, southern gentlemen talk about the *aggressions* of the North, and threaten to break up the Union to secure their deliverance from our oppression! Will they snap asunder the cords that bind us, in *anticipation* of an act of justice? Suppose Congress should abolish slavery and the slave trade here; would such abolition interfere in any way with the constitutional rights of the slaveholding States? We in the North are upholding these evils in this District; we are morally and politically responsible for their continuance; and I say to gentlemen from the South, that if by the exercise of an unquestionable power of Congress we rid ourselves of this responsibility, it is our business and not yours. You have no right to complain, and your clamor in this respect about northern aggression ought to be regarded as an insult to the free States.

I pass to another topic. Since the formation of the Government, if I have rightly calculated, about five hundred thousand dollars have been paid by the United States, either directly or indirectly, for fugitive slaves that have taken shelter among the Creek and Seminole Indians. The most of this sum has been paid to the slaveholders of the State of Georgia alone, and directly from the public treasury.

Have the slave States the right thus to call on the General Government and the common fund of the nation to aid them? It has been truly said by an eminent man, himself a slaveholder, that "the existence, continuance, and support of slavery depend exclusively upon the power and authority of the several States in which it is situated." It was not the intention of our fathers, as I have already stated, that this Government should interfere with slavery in the States, either to strengthen it or to weaken it. It is their own affair; and if their laws are not strong enough to give it life, it must submit to its doom. When your bondman comes among us in the character of a fugitive, you have the right, guarantied by the express terms of the Constitution, to carry him again into slavery; but have no right to call upon us to pay our money for slaves escaping into Canada, Mexico, or among the savages and swamps of a Spanish province. Believing slavery to be a great moral and political evil, we will not go beyond the express letter of our covenant in giving it our support. The Constitution, in the language of Judge McLean, acts upon slaves as persons, and not as property. Congress has uniformly been governed by this principle; and you might as well call upon us to pay for your runaway mules as your slaves. The action of the treaty-making power has been different. A large number of slaves fled from their masters during our last war with Great Britain; and for twenty years did this Government ply its diplomacy in urging the British Government to pay for these fugitives. The sum of one million two hundred and four thousand dollars was at length obtained and paid to southern slaveholders. This open espousal of the cause of slavery by the Federal Government seems to have been sanctioned by the free States. It was not the work exclusively of southern men. The policy of our fathers was to discourage slavery, and as far as possible to divorce the Gov-

*Benton's late speech.

ernment from it. Is the reversal of this policy a northern aggression?

Again, in 1831 and 1833 the ships "Comet" and "Encomium," laden with slaves, were wrecked on British soil; and the Federal Government, again hoisting its flag over the peculiar institution, obtained from Great Britain twenty-five thousand pounds for slaves lost by these accidents. Similar losses were incurred by the subsequent fate of the "Enterprise," "Creole," and "Hermosa," and the United States threatened Great Britain with war for refusing to foot these bills of southern slaveholders. An honorable member of this House was virtually expelled from this Hall in 1842 for introducing resolutions denying the constitutional power of the Government to support the coastwise slave trade, and declaring its duty to relieve itself from all action in favor of slavery. The Senate, not wishing to be out-done by the House, unanimously adopted resolutions declaring it to be the duty of the Government to protect by its flag the rights of American slaveholders in British ports, where by the local law their slaves would otherwise become free. Were these aggressions upon southern rights?

Merely glancing at the unwarranted efforts of the Government to obtain pay for fugitives to Canada and Mexico, in 1826 and 1828, I proceed to notice a more remarkable example of Federal intervention in favor of slavery. About twenty-five years ago, when Mexico and Colombia, who had just achieved their independence of Spain, and emancipated their slaves, were threatening to grasp the island of Cuba, our Government distinctly intimated to these young Republics that they must abandon their purpose. And why? Because emancipation in Cuba might otherwise take place, and the contagion spread in the United States. Thus the Federal Government espoused the cause of slavery in Cuba, in order at the same time to perpetuate it in our own boasted land of freedom. It did the same thing in 1829. Were these acts northern aggressions? I need scarcely add in this connection, that the main, if not the sole reason why the United States have refused to acknowledge the independence of Hayti, or to hold intercourse with her, is, that the independence of a black Republic might prove dangerous to the perpetuity of American slavery. Thus the people of the North are deprived of the profits which would arise from established commercial relations between the two Governments, in order that southern slavery may be sustained.

In 1807, Congress passed a law regulating the coast-wise slave trade in vessels of over forty tons burden, and prescribing minutely the manifests, forms of entry at the custom-house, and specifications to be made by the masters of such vessels. The North was thus made responsible for a traffic which is piracy by the law of nations; and such has been our forbearance towards the South, that we have made no effort to relieve ourselves of this responsibility. Take another item of congressional legislation in favor of slavery, the act of 1793 This act made it the duty of State magistrates to assist in the recapture of fugitives, and for nearly fifty years the slaveholders had the benefit of it, in the prompt interference of the authorities of the North in behalf of their institution. This act, so far as it imposed duties on State magistrates, was unconstitutional, and has been so decided; but it committed the free States to the support of slavery, and gave important aid to the South during the whole period named. Nor is this all. Most of the free States re-enacted the substance of this act, as to the duty of State magistrates, and its provisions and penalties respecting the harboring or concealing of fugitives—thus legislating in favor of slavery, and of course out of a tolerant spirit towards the South. There is no constitutional or moral obligation which required it. It was a bounty, a gratuity, bestowed by the North as a token of sympathy for slaveholders; for the recovery of fugitives, and the penalty for obstructing their recapture, are matters of Federal cognizance entirely, as I have already shown. Yet these enactments now stand unrepealed on the statute books of several of the northern States. In my own State we have a law punishing, by a fine not exceeding five hundred dollars, the harboring of a fugitive slave, as an "offence against the peace and dignity of the State of Indiana." And this law is not a dead letter. Men are indicted and punished under it. Our courts and juries do not hesitate to regard it. Our Legislature, I know, is exceedingly well disposed towards it; for all attempts to repeal our "black laws" (and some of them are much blacker than this) have thus far signally failed. Is all this legislation of the North in behalf of the slaveholders an aggression upon their rights?

I have already stated that Florida was purchased because it was demanded by the slaveholding interest. I omitted the fact, that under the treaty by which it was acquired, and the laws of Congress enacted to carry it into effect, this Government felt itself called upon to pay to the Florida slaveholders forty thousand dollars for slaves lost by the invasion of our troops in 1812. I have also passed over the inhuman slave code by which Florida was governed while a territory, and which, of course, derived its validity from the sanction of Congress. I next observe, that our first Seminole or Florida war received its birth in the jealous vigilance of the Federal Government in behalf of the interests of slavery. It was occasioned by the destruction of a negro fort on the Appalachicola river in 1816, by officers and troops in the service of the United States. About three hundred men, women, and children, were killed. It is true they were mostly fugitives; but they were living peaceably in Spanish territory. Certainly, the Government was under no obligation to commit this wholesale murder, merely because the slaveholders of Florida desired it. Yet Congress, in 1839, passed a law by which the sum of five thousand dollars was paid out of the common treasury of the Government to its officers and crew for blowing up this fort. Was this, too, a northern aggression?

The second Florida war was likewise waged and carried on for the benefit of slaveholders. Of the necessity for this war at the time the Nation saw fit to engage in it, I shall not speak. With its immediate cause or occasion I have nothing to do. I only assert (and this is sufficient for my purpose) that the war had its *origin* in the long-continued previous interference of the Federal Government in favor of the slaveholders of Georgia, Alabama, and Florida. Slaves fled from their masters in Georgia, and took refuge among the Creek Indians, as far back as our revolutionary war.

They continued to escape till the formation of the Government; and as early as 1790, the United States entered into a treaty with the Creeks, in which they agreed, in consideration of an annuity of fifteen hundred dollars, and certain goods mentioned, to deliver up the negroes then residing in their territory to the officers of the United States. And "during a period of more than thirty years 'was the influence of the Federal Government ex-'erted for the purpose of obtaining these fugitive 'slaves, or in extorting from the Indians a compen-'sation for their owners. The Senate was called 'upon to approve these treaties, Congress was 'called on to pass laws, and to appropriate money 'to carry these treaties into effect, and the people 'of the free States to pay the money and bear the 'disgrace, in order that slavery may be sustained. 'But the consequences of these efforts still con-'tinue, and the Government has, to this day, been 'unable to extricate itself from the difficulties into 'which these exertions in behalf of slavery pre-'cipitated it." A large portion of the fugitives from Georgia who fled prior to 1802, intermarried with the Seminoles or southern Creek Indians. The Government, by treaty in 1821, compelled the Creeks to pay for these fugitives five or six times their value. The Creeks, supposing they had thus acquired a good title to them from the United States, claimed the wives and children of the Seminoles as their property. The latter, not being willing to part with their families, and being harassed by the demands of the Creeks, agreed, by treaty in 1832, to remove West, and reunite with the latter tribe; the United States agreeing to have the claim of the Creeks investigated, and to liquidate it in behalf of the Seminoles if the amount did not exceed seven thousand dollars. The Seminoles, however finally refused to remove West, preferring to remain and fight the whites, rather than hazard the loss of their wives and children by becoming again incorporated with the Creeks. The interests of the Florida slaveholders required that the Seminoles should be *compelled* to emigrate, and the Government embarked in the undertaking. Such is a brief summary of facts connected with the celebrated Florida war, and showing the action of this Nation in favor of southern slaveholders. The war was begun by the United States to drive the Seminoles from their country. They refused to go because the Creeks would rob them of their wives and children in their new home. And the Government had by treaty forced these Creeks to pay the slaveholders an exorbitant price for these wives and children of the Seminoles, and thus laid the foundation of the claim which prevented them from removing West and brought on the war. It was, I repeat, a war for the exclusive benefit of slavery. It was conceived and brought forth in the unjustifiable interference of the Federal Government in favor of an institution local to the States in which it exists, and to which the Federal power does not extend. These facts are placed beyond all controversy by the documentary history of the country. And this war for the capture of fugitive slaves, and the massacre of Seminole Indians, with blood-hounds from Cuba as our auxiliaries, cost the nation the estimated sum of forty millions of dollars, drawn chiefly from the pockets of the people of the free States. We united with the South in its prosecution, and without any common interest in its objects, furnished our full share of the men and money required in the inglorious struggle. Was all this a northern aggression?

I come next to our war with Mexico. This, so far as the slaveholding States were concerned, was carried on for the acquisition of territory, into which they designed to carry the institution of slavery. History has placed this remarkable fact beyond all cavil. It is proved by the avowals of southern members of Congress, in their speeches in both Houses, in 1847. It is proved by the messages of southern governors, the action of southern legislatures, and the language of the southern people generally, assembled in their popular meetings, during the prosecution of the war. The motive of the South was not denied; it was palpable and undisguised. Other objects of the war were mentioned; but southern politicians did not pretend that they were controlling, or that the extension of slavery was not the principle which governed them in its prosecution. But what was the conduct of the free States—the aggressive and overbearing North—in respect to this war? Sir, we gave you our full share of the men and money required for its prosecution. Our northern members of Congress generally, united with the South in the acquisition of territory. I do not say they did this for the purpose of extending slavery; but they did it; and when, a few years before, our claim to the whole of Oregon dwindled down as low as forty-nine degrees—mainly under the influence of southern counsels—the North acquiesced. We were willing, both in regard to our difficulty with Great Britain and with Mexico, to be governed somewhat by *national* considerations, whilst the policy of the South in both these cases, was determined by her own sectional interests—that is, by the supposed effects which, in the one case or the other, would be produced upon the institution of slavery. In a war with Mexico our armies could not fail to be triumphant, and our booty must necessarily be territory. This would be adapted to slave labor, and would widen the platform of southern power. On the other hand, the issue of a war with Great Britain would be different. The South would doubtless be the main point of attack; and thus, the very existence of slavery in its strongholds would be jeoparded. And should even the whole of Oregon be secured, it would only bring into the Union additional free States; thus adding to the power of the North instead of the South, as a section. Such, unquestionably, were the considerations which shaped the policy of southern statesmen, and, through them, the policy of the Government itself, in our relations with Mexico and Great Britain. The North, as I have already said, acquiesced in both instances. Did this acquiescence manifest an aggressive spirit towards the South?

In the month of May, 1836, this House adopted a resolution, which excluded from being read or considered "*all petitions, memorials, resolutions, and propositions, relating in any way, or to any extent whatever, to the subject of slavery.*" The substance of this resolution continued in force till 1845. Thus, while the Government was spreading its flag over the peculiar institution in our intercourse with foreign Powers, and whilst slavery in this District and in the Territory of Florida was upheld by laws of Congress, we were denied the right to mention these grievances on this floor, or to petition for redress. So indulgent and concil-

iatory were the free States towards the slave power, that a large number of their Representatives in Congress united with the slaveholding members in virtually suspending the right of petition and the freedom of speech in this House, for the period of nine years together. Was this a northern aggression?

In some of the northern States, colored people enjoy equal political rights with the whites. In nearly all of them they are regarded as citizens. But they cannot visit South Carolina, Louisiana, and I believe some three or four other southern States, without being thrown into prison; and if they are not removed from the State by the persons in whose care or employ they came, they are sold into slavery. This is a most palpable violation of the Constitution of the United States, which provides that "the citizens of each State shall be entitled to all the privileges and immunities of citizens of the several States." And when we send men among you to appeal peaceably to your own tribunals in behalf of such citizens—men honored by their public standing, and clothed with official authority for their mission, they are driven out of your cities by mob menaces at the risk of their lives. Is this, too, a northern aggression?

I pass, in conclusion, to some kindred considerations. The slave population of the Union in 1790, when the first census was taken, was about seven hundred thousand; it has now grown to three millions, covering fifteen States, and more than equals the whole voting population of the Union. This, by the way, surely cannot be *northern* encroachment. The population of the United States in 1840 was seventeen millions. The white population of the South was four millions seven hundred and eighty-two thousand, five hundred and twenty. The number of slaveholders does not appear to be capable of any exact ascertainment, and has been variously estimated from one hundred thousand to three hundred thousand. If we take into the account the actual number of *slave owners*, exclusive of their families, a fair estimate at present would probably be two hundred thousand; and many of these, doubtless, are minors and women. The white population of the free States in 1840 was nine millions six hundred and fifty-four thousand eight hundred and sixty-five. By comparing the slaveholders with the non-slaveholders of the South, according to their number as here estimated, it will appear that the former constitute only about *one-twentieth* of the white population of the slaveholding States. This is what we call the slave power. This is the force which is to dissolve the Union, and before which northern men bow down to offer up their homage. These two hundred thousand slaveholders, composed in part of women and minors, lord it over three millions of slaves; keep in subjection four or five millions of non-slaveholding whites of the South, besides the free blacks; and at the same time control, at their own will, from nine to ten millions of people in the free States, whose Representatives tremble and turn pale at the impotent threats of their southern overseers. Now, bearing in mind that the population of the free States is, and generally has been, about double that of the slave States, let us glance at the monopoly which this slave power has secured to itself of the offices of the Government. This may serve further to illustrate the subject of northern aggression.

Of the sixty-one years the Government has been in operation, the Presidency, with its immense power and patronage, has been filled by slaveholders about forty-nine years, and by non-slaveholders only a little more than twelve years. Seven of our Presidents have been slave owners—four not; and some of these had to give decided assurances to the South in order to be elected. The South has secured the important Cabinet offices in the same way. Thus of nineteen Secretaries of State, fourteen have been slaveholders, and only five non-slaveholders. With the exception of the office of Secretary of the Treasury, the South has had more than her share of all the Cabinet appointments. The slaveholding States have had the important office of Speaker of this House for more than thirty-eight years, the free States only about twenty-three years. The South has had twelve Speakers, the North only eight. The same inequality has prevailed in the foreign diplomacy of the Government. More of our foreign ministers, by about one-fourth, have been furnished by the South than the North. Turn to the Judiciary. The Chief Justice has been from the slave States about forty-nine years, and from the free States only twelve years, although much the larger portion of the business of the court originates in the latter. And it is a remarkable fact, that at no period since the formation of the Government, has the North had a majority on the Supreme Bench. The South has received the appointment of thirteen judges of the court, the North only twelve; and has, I repeat, always had the majority. Did the time allotted me permit, I might pursue this subject more in detail. It seems, however, unnecessary; for a distinguished southern gentleman [Mr. MEADE] himself admits, that although the South has been in a numerical minority for fifty years, she "has *managed* during the greater part of that period to control the destinies of this nation." What more could she ask? Why even now, whilst the cry of northern aggression continually meets us, the South has a slaveholding President elected by northern votes, a slaveholding Cabinet, a slaveholding Supreme Court, a slaveholding Speaker of this House, with slaveholding committees in both Houses; whilst slaveholding influences are unceasingly at work in hushing the anti-slavery agitation, and buying up one after another northern men, who are as mercenary in heart as they are bankrupt in moral principle. Sir, there is truth in the declaration of John Quincy Adams, that "the *propagation*, *preservation* and *perpetuation* of slavery is the vital and animating spirit of the National Government."

Still, southern gentlemen read us daily homilies here on the encroachments of the North; and the threat of disunion is the thunder with which, as usual, we are to be driven from our purpose, and frightened into uncomplaining silence. Mr. Chairman, the time has come when Representatives from the free States should speak plainly. Shall a blind fear of a dissolution of the Union make us slaves ourselves? The Federal Constitution was ordained, among other things, to secure the blessings of liberty. "The hour has come when we are to adopt or reject the degrading principle, that slavery and freedom are twin sisters of the Constitution, joined in a Siamese union, one and inseparable; that our fathers fought to build up a prison-house and a palace as the appropriate wings of the temple of

liberty; that in the flag they rallied under, the stars were for the whites, and the stripes for the blacks; that the North is to have leave for a virtuous prosperity, only by maintaining the South in a prosperity dependent on oppression and crime." This is the question forced upon us by the South, and it must be met. There can be no such thing as dodging it. If our view of the Constitution and its objects be correct, we have rights under it which the South should not withhold; if her view is the true one, and slavery is the great concern of this nation, to be upheld and fostered by all its power, then we should understand it at once. Sir, I entertain no such opinion of the Government under which we live. I have shown that our fathers entertained no such opinion. We mean to stand by the Constitution as they understood it. We only ask our constitutional rights. We simply demand a return of the Government to its early policy in relation to slavery. I speak frankly. I am willing to submit to wrongs already inflicted; but if further submission be exacted as the price of the Union, I would say to our southern friends, take the putrescent corpse of slavery into your embrace, and let your contemplated Southern Confederacy encircle it amidst the hisses of the civilized world. During the last summer, I told the people I now have the honor to represent, that I would rather see the breaking up of the Union than the extension of slavery into our territories either by the action or permission of the Government. I reiterate that declaration here. Sir, this is the proper forum on which the South should be met in the discussion of the question of slavery; and I despise the skulking and cowardly miscreant who, after having obtained his seat on this floor by his anti-slavery pledges, turns politely to the South and tells her, that "when he wants to talk about slavery, he will go home among his own constituents, where he has the right to speak upon it." Such men have been the curse of the nation. Had northern politicians resisted the aggressions of the South, as it was their duty to do, in the onset, the unhappy crisis in which the country is now placed would have been averted. The great danger to the Union has always been in the North. The South has been much given to bluster, which in itself is harmless, but northern men have been frightened by it into servility. Here lies the great peril now. I have no fears that the South will sunder the Union, notwithstanding the madness of her politicians. The sober second thought of her people, underlying the froth of her representatives, will be proof against it. But, let northern men continue a little longer to cower before the threats of slaveholders, instead of meeting them with a manly firmness; let them surrender one after another the rights of the free States, and make merchandise of their honor, until our degradation can no longer be concealed by the devices of politicians, and the dissolution of the Union will be inevitable. The disease in the body politic will have taken such deep root as to be incurable by any other process. He is not the friend, but the real enemy of the Union, who smilingly tells the slaveholders that all is well, and raises the cry of "peace, peace, when there is no peace." Sir, the contest between slavery and freedom has ripened. To talk of compromise is folly. That medicine has been tried, and has proved worse than the disease it was designed to cure. It is not within the power of Congress to compromise the moral sentiment of the free States; and any attempt to do so would only madden and increase the existing excitement, and multiply obstacles in the way of any pacific adjustment of the questions in dispute. Between slavery and freedom there is and can be no affinity; nor can all the compromises in the world unite and harmonize what God by his eternal law has put asunder.

Mr. Chairman, it has become quite fashionable to denounce the anti-slavery agitation of the North. Gentlemen tell us it is disturbing the peace of the country, dividing the nation into "geographical parties," and threatening to destroy the Union. Sir, let me ask, at whose door lies the blame for all this? What are the causes which have given birth to this agitation, and these so-called sectional parties? The South, as I have already shown, by the help or permission of the North, has controlled the offices of the Government and shaped its policy for the last fifty years. Through her agency slavery has been widening its power, and taking deeper and deeper root in the country every hour of that whole period. Instead of an institution barely to be tolerated in a few States as their own exclusive concern, and that for a time only, it has become *nationalized*, and demands the protection of this Government "wherever our flag floats." It has grown to be the great interest of the Union, and subordinates all other questions to its unholy purposes. It has reversed the original policy of the Government, disappointed the hopes and expectations of its founders, and to a great extent frustrated the ends of its formation. And when, after long years of unpardonable forbearance, a portion of the northern people rise up and demand their just rights, refusing to be the *absolute* slaves of the South, they are denounced as "agitators," enemies of the Union, the builders up of geographical parties. Sir, I meet these charges, and I say to southern gentlemen, that they have *forced* agitation upon us. It is the only alternative left us, unless we submit to be bound by them "in all cases whatsoever." I know it is offensive to the South. I know that distinguished gentlemen from that quarter have admitted that northern agitation has prevented slavery from obtaining a foothold in California. They understand and dread its power. It is for this reason that I would encourage it. Agitation is a necessary fruit, an inevitable consequence of southern aggression and northern cowardice; and slavery propagandists and doughfaces must answer for their own political sins. To charge the friends of freedom in the North with kindling up strife in the land and thus endangering the Union, is as unjust as to charge the blood shed in our Revolution upon the heads of those who counseled resistance to the mother country. Am I told that we should not wound the pride of the South? Sir, on what occasion has she exhibited any great tenderness for the pride of the North? She has pursued towards us a policy of systematic selfishness from the beginning, uniformly disregarding our most cherished feelings when they have crossed her path. When we ask her respectfully to yield us our rights under the Constitution, we are met with browbeating and threats. And are the interests of freedom to be jeoparded over half a continent in order to avoid wounding the *pride* of men who thus treat us? Sir, their pride is not worth saving at such a sacri-

fice. It is not the pride of principle, of justice, but the pride of arrogance, pampered into insolence by long indulgence; and, under no circumstances would I yield to it. The history of the world demonstrates, that slavery, regardless of soil or climate, has existed wherever it has not been interdicted by positive legislation. It always establishes itself in the first instance without law, and then suborns the law into its support. Without the aid, of any legal sanction, it has at one time or another crept into every portion of the earth that has yet been inhabited. No "law of physical geography," no "ordinance of nature," has been found sufficient, independent of human enactments, to prevent its spread over the globe. Every consideration, therefore, demands that Congress should exclude it from our territories. We should thus imitate the example of our fathers by "reënacting the law of God," and at the same time restore their policy in relation to slavery. The North should demand this as her absolute right, and insist upon it at whatever hazard. Should the South take offence, let her be offended; should her pride be wounded, let her own physicians heal it in their own way; should she see fit to dissolve the Union, let her make the attempt, but let the North yield not a single hair's breadth to the further exactions of the slave power.

But suppose, Mr. Chairman, we resolve to compromise: I ask, what are the terms upon which alone the South is willing to meet us? On this subject we are not left in doubt. We are to allow slavery to continue indefinitely in the District of Columbia; we are to abandon the territories of the United States to its inroads; we are to engage actively in the business of slave-catching under the employ of our southern masters; and finally, we must silence the anti-slavery agitation, obeying their imperious mandate, "keep your thoughts to yourselves." This is the very modest demand of the South, and we must allow her to make a compliance with it a qualification for political fellowship, a test of fitness for office, and the only tie which is hereafter to bind her to the free States. With southern politicians this is the question of questions. It towers above every other consideration. *Doughfaces* are found only in the northern States. The Whigs and Democrats of the South, laying aside minor differences, stand shoulder to shoulder together in the maintenance of their great interest. In comparison with it the questions of bank and tariff are not even respectable abstractions. And shall the North be less loyal to freedom than the South is to slavery? Have we no paramount question? Shall we surrender our political birthright in a quarrel about comparative trifles, or a mere scramble for place and power? We have the strength to repel the further aggressions of slavery. Shall we waste it by our divisions, instead of declaring in one united voice, and with an inflexible purpose, "thus far, no farther?" I know by experience something of the power of party. I know how anxious are northern Whigs and Democrats to maintain their national party organizations, in the discipline of which they have so long served. I know how repugnant it is to their feelings, when the old questions between them are rapidly losing their significance, to have new ones thrust upon them, threatening discord and incurable divisions in their ranks. But should there be no bounds to our devotion to party? Each of the political organizations to which I have alluded consists of a northern and southern division, diametrically opposed to each other on the question of slavery. These divisions must be held together by some common bond of union, and this bond is subserviency to the slave interest. This fact can no longer be concealed. The submission of northern politicians to the behests of slavery is openly proclaimed by southern gentlemen as the sole condition upon which existing party associations can be maintained. Are we prepared for this submission, to seal this bond of union? We must either do this, or resist like men. The alternatives are presented, and there is no middle ground to occupy. We must choose our master; for it is as impossible to serve slavery and freedom at the same time, as to serve God and Mammon. We must ally ourselves to the growing spirit of freedom in the North, which, sooner or later, *must* be heeded, or we must link our political fortunes to the growing spirit of slavery in the South, which, sooner or later, must be borne down by the powers with which it is at war. We must organize our parties in reference to the increasing anti-slavery feeling of fifteen States of the Union, and ten or twelve millions of people, reinforced by the sentiment of the civilized world; or we must turn our backs upon the progress of free principles, in order to propitiate the smiles of an oligarchy of two or three hundred thousand slaveholders. We must sympathize with the spirit of liberty, which is now swelling the heart of Christendom, and causing even despotisms to tremble; or we must hold no communion with that spirit, and spurn it from our thoughts, lest the dealers in human flesh should be offended, and refuse to aid us in the prosecution of our partisan schemes. Such, I repeat, are the alternatives to which our slaveholding brethren have invited our attention. For one, I am ready to choose between them. I will enter into no "covenant with death." I will agree to no truce with slaveholders so long as they insist upon their unholy exactions. I will form no alliance with men who foreordain my submission to their will as the tenure of their friendship. And the party, in my judgment, that shall now seek to maintain its unity by yielding to these demands of slavery, will dig for itself a political grave from which there will be no resurrection. It may survive for a time; it may achieve a temporary triumph over its adversary; but it will array itself in hostility to the rights of man, sacrifice its integrity and moral influence, and thus perish by its own suicidal hand. Sir, I can acknowledge no allegiance to any such party. Its conventions and caucus arrangements have no power over my action. Not servility to the South, but uncompromising resistance to her further encroachments, must determine my party associations. This, I have already said, is the *paramount* question, upon which all the parties of the North should band themselves together as one man. Most of the questions which have heretofore divided the American people have been settled. Is there any issue now on the subject of a United States bank? Experience has shown that this nation can prosper without such an institution. It is not demanded by the voice of the people, nor the exigencies of the Government. Years ago, it was declared by the highest Whig authority to be "an obsolete idea." Is there any issue as to dis-

tributing the proceeds of the public lands? It has been swept away by the tide of political events, and the beneficent doctrine of land reform is destined, I trust, at some time not far in the future, to receive the sanction of Congress. Is there any real question at present respecting a protective tariff? Some faint efforts are being made to galvanize this question into life, and drag it from the grave into which it is sinking; but these efforts will be fruitless. I have no belief that this Government will return to the old-fashioned Whig policy of high protective duties. The spirit of the age, and the policy of the leading nations of the earth, are tending more and more in the direction of free trade; whilst the restrictive systems of the past are perishing from the same causes that have originated and are carrying forward other reforms. The philanthropy which is elevating the condition of the toiling million, mitigating the rigors of penal law, and breaking the chains of the slave, is at the same time removing the shackles from the commerce of the world. It is not protection to capital, but protection to man's rights, protection to the hand that labors, that should invoke the action of the Government. It is not protection to American manufactures, but protection to American *men*, that I would now advocate; and, like the founders of the Government, I would make it the starting point in politics, the great central truth in my political creed, to which questions of mere policy should be subordinate.

"Is the dollar only real? God and truth and right a dream? Weighed against your lying ledgers, must our manhood kick the beam?"

Must we blink humanity itself out of sight, in our loyalty to "regular nominations," or our devotion or opposition to measures of policy that are dead and buried? The northern States have declared that Congress should prevent the introduction of slavery into the territories of the Government. The southern States declare that this shall not be done. It is a contest between the two sections of the Union as to whether slavery or freedom shall establish her altars in those territories. It is a contest between liberty and despotism. It is not a quarrel about "goat's wool" or a mere *punctilio*, but a struggle in which great interests and great principles are at stake; a struggle, the issue of which is to determine the weal or woe of millions, and addresses itself not to the judgments only, but to the consciences of northern men. The free-soil men in Congress desire the application of the ordinance of Jefferson, come what may. In order to maintain their faithfulness to this principle, they have sundered their party allegiance, and for this cause they are denounced as "fanatics." The vocabulary of our language is ransacked for words strong enough to express their baseness and infamy as a party, and their depravity and recklessness as men. The gentleman from Tennessee, [Mr. SAVAGE,] who addressed the committee on yesterday, has already consigned them to their fate, among the outcasts and offscouring of the earth. The gentleman from Maryland [Mr. MCLANE] is so brimfull of wrath at their iniquities, that he styles them "a pestilent set of vipers, that ought in God's name to be destroyed." Sir, it might be well for the honorable gentleman to try that experiment. I have yet to learn that free-soil men have not the same rights in this country and on this floor as slave-soil men. I have yet to learn that the doctrine of slavery restriction, which was a virtue in our fathers in 1787, is a crime in their descendants, which should doom them to destruction; and I have yet to learn that the *masses* in the free States are not in favor of that doctrine, and will not stand by it and its advocates to the last hour.

Mr. Chairman, it was my fortune last year, in the congressional district I have the honor to represent, to witness an effort to annihilate these "vipers," so heartily detested by the gentleman from Maryland. I would say to him, too, that the project was not set on foot by Democrats, but by Taylor Whig managers. What was the result of this experiment? Sir, the Democrats made common cause with the Free-Soil party, adopted the ordinance of Jefferson as a part of their platform, and thus achieved a triumph over their foe. And judging from such indications as I have seen of their present opinions and purposes, these Democrats have not receded, and are not likely to recede, from the principles which they endorsed a year ago in their county conventions, and by their political action; whilst the organs of the Whig party in that same district are now discoursing sweet music to the tune of *non-intervention!* In 1848, these Whig leaders were for the proviso against the world. It was their undoubted thunder, which the Free-Soil men were feloniously endeavoring to purloin from them. They declared the Whigs to be the only true anti-slavery party. They denounced General Cass as a heartless and unmitigated doughface, for writing his non-intervention Nicholson letter. Multitudes voted for General Taylor, without pretending that he was in favor of free soil, but merely to crush the non-intervention heresy, and "to beat Cass," who now seems, after all, in a fair way to be canonized as a political saint by these same anti-slavery Whig leaders. Sir, instead of annihilating the Free-Soil party, they have been unconsciously playing their own game upon themselves. The rank and file of their party, I trust, will not follow them into the mire of "non-intervention by non-action" with slavery in the territories. I trust that the great body of the people of all parties in that district will stand firmly upon the platform of freedom, swerving neither to the right nor the left, favoring no further concessions to slavery, and frowning upon the northern recreant who shall be found doing battle for slaveholders against his own section of the Union.

But, however this may be, my own course is clear. I shall take no backward step. I have thrown my fortunes into the scale of freedom, and I am willing to abide the issue. Holding the views I have honestly embraced, reared as I have been in a free State, and representing as I do a constituency of freemen, I trust there is no earthly temptation that could seduce me from the cause I have espoused. And that cause, whatever may for the time betide it or its votaries, will as certainly triumph as that truth is omnipotent, or that God governs the world.

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